



NEWSLETTER

Dropouts and Democracy

SOME BELIEVE THE PURPOSE OF DROPOUT PREVENTION IS KEEPING STUDENTS IN HIGH SCHOOL UNTIL THEY GRADUATE. THEY SUGGEST THAT SUCH EFFORTS HELP TO IMPROVE THE CHANCES FOR SUCCESS IN LIFE. BUT THE PRIMARY GOAL IS HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION, NO MATTER THE NATURE OF THE HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE. THESE NOTIONS SEEM TRUE. YET, THERE IS A HIGHER CALLING FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION, ONE NOT JUST CONNECTED TO KEEPING KIDS IN SCHOOL UNTIL THEY GRADUATE. RATHER, IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY, ONE OF THE MAJOR OBJECTIVES OF AN EDUCATIONAL GOAL IS CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS. YOUTH NEED TO LEARN HOW TO BE CITIZENS AND HOW TO CONTRIBUTE, ASSESS, AND ACT UPON CIVIC MATTERS THAT AFFECT THEIR LIVES.



Service-Learning

As John Dewey wrote, democracy is based on education. Without adequate opportunities to learn how to think, analyze, and decide important civic matters, an individual in a democracy is not prepared to fully participate as a citizen. If too many students fail to acquire this knowledge and skill, the democracy might fail. And that would be a tragedy beyond imagination.

If citizenship is one of the primary goals of education in a society, then two of the strategies that are designed to be effective dropout prevention programs have added importance because their ultimate goals include civic participation and full political and economic participation in society. Those two strategies, of course, are service-learning and career/technical education. These two programs prepare youth for citizenship and for full economic engagement in society.

Research efforts support these positions. *The Silent Epidemic* (2006), a study commissioned by the Gates Foundation, found through focus groups with dropouts that more than 80% indicated they might have stayed in school if they had active learning programs that connected them with community for service and meaningful work (service-learning and career education). Students enjoy the hands-

on learning associated with these two reform efforts and find special meaning in the opportunity to contribute something of value to their society—and themselves. Service-learning connects academic learning with real contributory work; it makes the student feel proud of accomplishing something that is beneficial to others. More importantly, it helps students to become more civically connected.

Another more compelling reason to do dropout prevention: Students who drop out aren't civically engaged. In fact, they are less likely to participate in community and civic life. According to *America's Civic Health Index: Broken Engagement*, which measures 40 indicators of civic health over the past 30 years, high school dropouts are (when compared to college students),

- only half as likely to vote,
- one-quarter as likely to volunteer in their community,
- only one-third as likely to attend club meetings,
- and only one-half as likely to engage in public work in communities.

These figures indicate that dropout prevention is a serious issue for both education and the maintenance of our democracy. It's time we pay attention to both concerns and implement

more programs that involve students in service and in programs that make them college and career ready. Anything less is a denial of *our own* civic duty: to prepare the next generation of citizens for a thriving democracy.

Some of the other material contained in this newsletter highlight this theme of the importance of service and civic engagement. These ideas are developed in the Viewpoint of Cathy Berger Kaye and in the review of the book by Diane Ravitch on the failure of the No Child Left Behind Act to provide meaningful educational reform. In many ways, NCLB has led to the demise of effective programs, such as service-learning, that have helped to engage students in the community and to connect them with the kinds of learning experiences that are exactly what is needed to keep young people in school.

Thus, the goal of dropout prevention is getting students excited about learning, engaging them in subjects they like to learn about, and involving them in careers that help to shape their futures. All three go together, and combined, produce a potent antidote to the malaise and lack of focus of potential dropouts around the country.

—Robert Shumer
Guest Editor

2011 NDPN Crystal Star Winners

At the 2011 National Dropout Prevention Network Conference, held in Schaumburg, IL, outstanding members of the National Dropout Prevention Network (NDPN) were honored. Complete descriptions, audio interviews, and photographs of these recipients can be found on our Web site at www.dropoutprevention.org/news/crystal-star-winners. Congratulations to all our winners!

Distinguished Leadership and Service Winner

Dr. Robert Shumer of the University of Minnesota was honored by the NDPN with a Crystal Star Award of Excellence in Distinguished Leadership and Service. His award is the highest award given by the Network; recipients demonstrate extraordinary commitment to the NDPN and its goals. From serving on the editorial board for the *International Journal of School Disaffection*, to writing for publication,

(including a monograph, *Youth-Led Evaluation*), to presenting conference presentations and pre-sessions, to participating on Performance Assessment Review teams for the National Dropout Prevention Center, and to being guest editor for this newsletter, Dr. Shumer has shown a great capacity to work within our organization to reach our common goals.

Individual Award Winner

Deb Dillon, Principal of Woodrow Wilson High School and Director of Alternative Programs in Fargo Public Schools, was honored by the NDPN with a Crystal Star Award of Excellence in Dropout Prevention.

Program Award Winners

The College of Lake County (CLC) Educational Talent Search was honored with a Crystal Star Award of Excellence in Dropout Prevention. The College of Lake County, a two-year comprehensive community college located in Lake County, IL, is the primary postsecondary institution serving student populations who are first-generation and low-income households. CLC will continue its successful Educational Talent Search Program by serving 850 eligible student participants from its four target high schools: North Chicago Community High School, Waukegan High School, Round Lake Area High School, and Zion-Benton Township High School.

Sarah Pyle Academy, Wilmington, DE, was honored with a Crystal Star Award of Excellence in Dropout Prevention. Sarah Pyle Academy is an academically accelerated, nontradition-

al high school in the Christina School District with a student population of 160. Students succeed due to smaller class size, computer-based learning programs, concentration on academics, collegial/family orientated student/staff relationships, strict behavioral/conduct expectations, goal setting, and an accepting environment.

Wilson County Department of Social Services Success in School Program

was honored with a Crystal Star Award of Excellence in Dropout Prevention. The Wilson County Department of Social Services' Success in School Program targets teenage custodial parents receiving childcare subsidies to continue attending school and obtain a high school diploma. Success in School incorporates a strengths-based, intense case management intervention while providing "best practice" strategies grounded in a System of Care approach to encourage, support, educate, and motivate teenage parents to continue their goal of achieving a high school diploma.

Center Grove Alternative Academy (CGAA) of Greenwood, IN, was honored with a Crystal Star Award of Excellence in Dropout Prevention. CGAA serves a variety of students. Juniors and seniors are referred by their counselor due to struggles—emotionally, educationally, personally, or financially. Students attend CGAA in the morning or afternoon block. In addition, they are required to maintain meaningful employment or attend the partnering vocational school. The online mastery curriculum, which meets all standards set by the Indiana Department of Education, allows students to work at their own pace.



National
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NEWSLETTER

The *National Dropout Prevention Newsletter* is published quarterly by the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network. Your comments are always welcome. Please address mail to:

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Robert Shumer, Guest Editor
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Pictured from L to R:
Dr. Robert Shumer, University of Minnesota; Ms. Deb Dillon, Woodrow Wilson High School; Ms. Tracey Mooring, Wilson County Department of Social Services Success in School Program; Ms. Beth Bryant, Center Grove Alternative Academy; Ms. Sharon Hill, Sarah Pyle Academy; and Ms. Sharon Sanders-Funnye, The College of Lake County Educational Talent Search

Network Notes

Sam Drew, Interim Director

■ Clemson University's College of Health, Education and Human Development named Dr. Sam Drew as interim executive director of the National Dropout Prevention Center.



A seasoned veteran in the field of education whose career spans more than 39 years, Drew has been associate director for research and evaluation for the Center since 2002. Dr. Drew will act as executive director for the Center while the College of Health, Education and Human Development conducts a national search to permanently fill the position.

Executive Director Sought

■ The National Dropout Prevention Center seeks a highly accomplished, dynamic leader to serve as executive director. The executive director of the National Dropout Prevention Center will also serve as the executive director of the National Dropout Prevention Network and is a member of its board of directors. This is a unique opportunity to lead the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, providing vision and leadership to fulfill its mission at this pivotal point in the NDPC's history. Information about applying for this position is available at our Web site, www.dropoutprevention.org.

New Web Page

■ We are pleased to be introducing our Network Board members to the membership via the Web site. Be sure to check it out each month as we highlight our amazing Board and the important contributions they make to the success of our organization. This month we are introducing our Chair, Stuart Udell, and our Vice Chair, Andrea Foggy-Paxton. Be sure you visit our home page for the most current link!

Solutions Archives

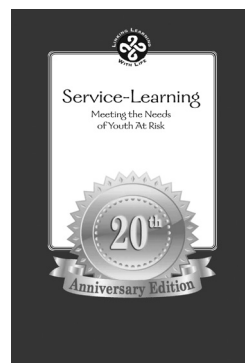
■ Did you know you could listen to Solutions to the Dropout Crisis programs that you missed?



Solutions has been producing some very informative programs lately —or example, Network members Drew Hinds and Chet Edwards' topic was on designing and evaluating alternative programs, and Terry Pickeral's program was about the importance of school climate. Tune in any time to our Web site and find the wealth of resources accompanying each broadcast! You can also subscribe to *Solutions* on iTunes!

Twenty Years and Counting

■ In 1992, the National Dropout Prevention Center published a monograph, *Service-Learning: Meeting the Needs of Youth At Risk*. Since that time, the NDPC has integrated the pedagogy of service-learning into its Effective Strategies, developed the *Linking Learning With Life* series of resources, helped establish the International Center for Service-Learning in Teacher Education, and hosted countless professional development institutes and conferences around service-learning. We are delighted to republish the publication that launched our work in the service-learning field and share it with today's Network members.



Upcoming Events

■ Two NDPC/N sponsored conferences are coming up soon in the next few months. Check out our Web site for more information and for online registration.

24th Annual At-Risk Youth National FORUM

February 19 - 22, 2012

Embassy Suites at
Kingston Plantation
Myrtle Beach, SC



2012 National Forum on Dropout Prevention for Native and Tribal Communities



April 15 - 18, 2012
Sheraton Crescent Hotel
Phoenix, AZ

Meet Our Guest Editor

■ We appreciate the services of Dr. Rob Shumer, who has served as the Guest Editor of this issue of the Newsletter. Rob recently was the recipient of the 2011 Crystal Star Award for Distinguished Leadership and Service. The NDPC first partnered with Rob when he was the Director of the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. He is also the author of the NDPC's *Youth-Led Evaluation: A Guidebook*, which has been used all across the nation to facilitate involving young people in evaluating both service-learning and best practices in their schools.



Program Profile

Service-Learning as Dropout Intervention and More

by Michael VanKeulen

As a member of the National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC), I am afforded opportunities to visit schools across the United States to better understand how their efforts in service-learning are impacting student achievement and character development. Two locations, Guilford County Schools in North Carolina and Opportunity High School in Minnesota, are excellent examples of a commitment and creativity that ensures a quality-learning environment for all students.

In Districtwide Efforts, Service-Learning Matters

Guilford County Schools (GCS) is expanding their already successful model for academic success and strength of character for every student in the district. Through the leadership of Superintendent Maurice “Mo” Green, this school district of more than 75,000 students demonstrates that a strong commitment to service-learning pays off. In the last two years, this district has been working to train every K-12 teacher on how to best apply service-learning in the classroom. A common phrase around the district regarding teaching is: “Service-learning is not another thing on the plate; it is the plate.” These teachers identify authentic and complex routes for students to learn and apply math, language arts, and science in order to solve meaningful problems in the world. Teacher investment is high, with several sharing their lesson plans on NYLC’s Generator School Network—a community of schools committed to best practices in service-learning, where users ask others to critique, add, or comment on lessons in the hopes of continually improve their practices.

Through a growing relationship with Communities In Schools of North



Opportunity High students at the ArtShack.

Carolina (CISNC), the successes of GCS will have greater impact. CISNC Field Services Specialist, Nick DiColandrea notes, “A perfect storm of resources and opportunities is taking shape in GCS.” The district is connecting student academic achievement to character education, service-learning, and numerous community engagement strategies and is become a leading model of replication for other school districts in the state. CISNC is also helping to organize a statewide service-learning coalition to help advance this service-learning model throughout the state.

Students have also recognized this call to engaged leadership. In Ms. Alexis Gines’ high school literature class, students have made connections to the International Civil Rights Museum by asking for help to better understand why the achievement gap exists in the nation. They have since

made a connection to Ms. Dorothy Cotton, the former Education Director for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference during the 1960s, and a very close associate of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. They have asked Ms. Cotton to help them translate Dr. King’s vision into a 21st century curriculum that fits their district. This work led to an invitation from the students to Ms. Cotton who now plans to join them in GCS in April. They hope to ensure that all students feel obligated to be just as engaged and that justice for all students will be the norm and, in part, a product of their hard efforts.

In One School, Service-Learning Matters

In Minneapolis, MN there is a rather small but ambitious alternative high school, Opportunity High. This school serves around 150 high school students identified as at risk of

Service-Learning as Dropout Intervention and More *(Continued)*

dropping out. Many of the students are from families who were refugees from Somalia. Opportunity High provides strong leadership training, positive relationships, mentoring from staff and community members, and service-learning to advance the academic achievement of students.

In one course, students have been studying American Pioneer life, a project that addresses state standards in social studies, environmental science, language arts, and visual arts. Individual as well as group projects are common throughout the course. Lee Harberts, a senior who has been with the school for two years and is planning on graduating this spring, was discussing some of the struggles of European pioneers in Minnesota during the 19th century and how their lives were especially challenged during the cold winters.

Lee and his classmates decided to share their learning with commu-

nity members by building a replica pioneer shack, an "ArtShack," that the students will place into the middle of an ice fishing village—a village of fish-houses that sit atop a frozen lake. They plan to invite ice villagers to tour their ArtShack and discuss pioneer life. They also hope to share an art gallery that they will create within the ArtShack. Trevor Byrd, student, expects there will be tours for both kids and adults to share a public art experience and honor the tough lives of those early pioneers. Through the connection of pioneer history, the students believe that their art project will be able to create a well-educated and better community on that frozen lake.

Engaged Students Use Education to Better Belong

Guilford County Schools and Opportunity High know their students benefit from pro-social activities

where students identify and then address meaningful needs or opportunities in their communities. These organizations recognize that it is not enough to get at-risk youth reconnected to school; school is temporary. These educators seek positive youth connections to the larger community. For students to have true strength of character, leadership, and sound academic skills, these attributes must be tested and achieved in authentic moments such as those provided in service-learning experiences. These educational environments don't ignore that age-old student question, "When am I ever going to use this in the real world?"

—Michael VanKeulen
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About the National Youth Leadership Council



For more than 25 years, NYLC has led a movement that links youth, educators, and communities to redefine the roles of young people in society. That movement is service-learning, and it empowers youth to transform themselves into valuable, contributing members of a democracy.

Service-learning is a teaching method that enriches learning by engaging students in meaningful service to their schools and communities through a process that is carefully integrated with learning objectives. It emphasizes critical thinking and problem solving, tackles challenges such as hunger and homelessness, and values people of all ages as having talents to offer.

Each year, thousands of service-learning practitioners improve their practice with the help of NYLC through:

- National Service-Learning Conference®
- Project Ignition
- National Youth Leadership Training
- Generator School Network

Among its many accomplishments, NYLC has led the development of nationally accepted standards for K-12 service-learning practice and is helping implement and improve service-learning programs around the world. NYLC helped write the service-learning provision for the National Community Service Act, advised the Clinton transition team on the creation of the Learn and Serve America grant program, and is now consulting on the role of high quality service-learning practice in the Obama service and education agendas. Yet whether raising visibility about student-led successes or participating in coalition advocacy campaigns, NYLC continues to raise up the voices of youth and provide support to the field.

As it moves through its third decade, NYLC remains focused on its mission to create a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world with young people, their schools, and their communities through service-learning. Learn more at NYLC's Web site, www.nylc.org.

Book Review

The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice are Undermining Education, 2010. Diane Ravitch. Basic Books. [ISBN: 9780465014910]

The tenth anniversary of the No Child Left Behind legislation is January 2012. Legislators, educators, and the public have been debating the value and impact of this law since its inception. Some thoughts have ranged from NCLB being a very important and effective piece of legislation because it brought attention to the achievement gap and how our country needed to spend time, money, and effort on bringing challenged students to “proficiency.” Others have called the law “the worst education legislation ever passed by Congress (p.244, Ravitch).” That author’s perspective is especially significant because she, Diane Ravitch, was one of the chief architects of the legislation. That she has reversed herself on the entirety of the law and its impact is of particular note.

Ravitch is very clear about why the act failed: Its obsessive focus on the use of high stakes tests to measure everything from student achievement to teacher, school, and district effectiveness has forced educators to limit effective educational programs such as service-learning, career and technical education, and social studies. This has made school less inviting for students and less enjoyable for teachers. Worse, it changed the goals of education. The implementation of the Act “neglected the central purpose of education: to shape good human beings, good citizens, people of good character with the knowledge and skills to make their way in the world and join with others to sustain and improve our democracy (p.245).” Rather than focusing school and education on the broader issues of life and citizen preparation, it only focused on skill and proficiency in a few areas, reducing programs that students said they wanted in order to stay in school: service-learning, apprenticeships, vocational education—many of the 15 strategies that are known to be effective in dropout prevention.

Earlier, Ravitch thought accountability, school choice, teacher evaluations tied to achievement scores, etc. would bring about a massive change in American education. Instead, she found that most of those initiatives had failed to deliver. Only time will tell how much the NCLB has harmed youth, especially those who were already disenchanted with school. Hopefully, policymakers and educators find their way back to the real purpose and function of schools: a chance to engage in exciting programs that will lead to lifelong learning and participation in democratic society.

—Rob Shumer, Guest Editor
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Also Recommended

The Complete Guide to Service Learning: Proven, Practical Ways to Engage Students in Civic Responsibility, Academic Curriculum, & Social Action, by Cathryn Berger Kaye. (Free Spirit Publishing, 2010)

This is clearly the go-to resource in the fast-growing field of service-learning. It is an award-winning treasury of service activities, community service project ideas, quotes, reflections, and resources that can help teachers and youth workers engage young hearts and minds in reaching out and giving back. It includes a blueprint for service-learning, from getting started to assessing the experience.

Resources

National Service-Learning Clearinghouse

This Web site, funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service, provides information and resources to support service-learning programs, practitioners, and researchers.
www.servicelearning.org

National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC)

The mission of the National Youth Leadership Council is to create a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world with young people, their schools, and their communities through service-learning.
www.nylc.org

Linking Learning With Life Series

This series is comprised of service-learning guidebooks and videos on a wide variety of topics for youth, educators, administrators, and community leaders.
www.dropoutprevention.org/publications

International Center for Service-Learning and Teacher Education

The International Center is committed to sharing experience, practice, and findings on service-learning in teacher education with colleagues throughout the world.
<http://educationprogram.duke.edu/ICSLTE>

Events

April 11-14, 2012 Minneapolis, MN
National Service-Learning Conference
—Our World, Our Future
www.nylc.org

April 15-18, 2012 Phoenix, AZ
2012 National Forum on Dropout Prevention for Native and Tribal Communities
www.dropoutprevention.org

Teacher Education, Service-Learning, and Dropout Prevention

by Marty Duckenfield and Rob Shumer

There has been plenty of information presented in this newsletter that supports the role of service-learning in dropout prevention. Engaging students in service-learning projects involves them in learning that has meaning, context, and relevance to their lives. It has the potential to involve their academic subjects and provides a platform for students to connect with the community, with jobs, and with contributing to something larger than themselves.

The challenge is, and has always been, preparing schools to implement and sustain service-learning programs so they grow, mature, and demonstrate/document the ability to actually retain and promote student learning. One of the biggest barriers/obstacles is training teachers to develop, implement, and assess good service-learning models. Ironically, one of the biggest challenges to preparing teachers to teach service-learning and other experiential/community connected programs is that teachers don't have the personal experience in the process. This is important because, as teacher education researcher Mary Kennedy, Director of the National Center for Research on Teacher Learning at Michigan State University, says "role models that novice teachers observed while they were children continue to hold tremendous sway. Often, despite their intentions, new teachers teach as they were taught (Kennedy, 1991)." Thus, the educational system reinforces itself—introduction of new methods are thwarted by years of exposure to traditional classroom structures.

While experience does affect one's orientation to teaching, research shows that being involved in a teacher education program that includes service-learning opportunities for future teachers makes a difference. Teacher candidates who go through such efforts learn more than just service-learning; they acquire through their experiences in the community, in a wide variety of settings, several important dispositions that help make

In order to ensure that service-learning is an effective dropout prevention strategy, we must ensure it gets more and better support both in our K-12 schools and in the teacher education programs that support them.

them better teachers for all students, but especially those from at-risk situations—caring, sensitivity to student differences, democratic values, and commitment to teaching. Learning within a teacher preparation program that includes service-learning also provides teacher candidates with profound experiences that foster increased knowledge of diversity, of culture and knowledge of students and their cultural connection to community, as well as knowledge about connecting content learning with community contexts (AACTE, 2002). Thus, there is a value-added dimension to teacher preparation programs in service-learning—it takes more than just prior experience to be effective. Teacher education programs in service-learning build on that knowledge and prepare teachers for the many facets of community-based learning programs.

We know that teacher quality affects the learning achievement of students. Involving prospective teachers in teacher training programs that incorporate service-learning experiences, as well as lessons in its pedagogy, helps them to perform better in classrooms later on. In order to ensure that service-learning is an effective dropout prevention strategy, we must ensure it gets more and better support both in our K-12 schools and in the teacher education programs that support them. Failure to do so will deprive students who are on their way to leaving school early

an opportunity to actually engage in a program that has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to positively address the dropout problem.

References

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Note

The International Center for Service-Learning in Teacher Education is a valuable resource for those interested in improving teacher education through service-learning. The International Center is committed to sharing experience, practice, and findings on service-learning in teacher education with colleagues throughout the world. They will be hosting an international conference at Duke University June 21-23, 2012. For more information, go to: <http://educationprogram.duke.edu/ICSLTE>



Viewpoint

What makes you excited about going to work or eager to learn a topic? On days I am looking forward to an especially good conversation or the opportunity to acquire a skill or knowledge that I want to know—on these days I bounce out of bed in the morning. My day has purpose.

Students also deserve to look forward to their days in schools. Yet for all too many, the humdrum repetitive nature and predictability of school sets in a sense of fatigue and, yes, boredom. The words *learning* and *boredom* should never be in the same sentence let alone experience! Youth today come alive with opportunities for developing their mind, their abilities and skills, and to have their interests and concerns honored by the adults around them. They want to create personal connections with the world up-close and the distant lives they hear about or glimpse in news and films. If the ultimate intention of

the study and rigor of school is only a grade, we have lost (as is evident in current dropout rates) all too many youth.

What makes a difference? Two key elements: providing youth with the requisite skills they need to be successful in learning and in life, and enabling them to apply their skills and knowledge through meaningful, purposeful acts.

One example is in Albion, New York, where service-learning is well integrated into Albion Central Schools. In fact, they recognize the power of service-learning to be what *will* keep kids engaged and showing up. To reinforce this concept, they moved their alternative education program for students identified as being at risk of dropping out to a less than typical location. School for these youth is held at a local retirement and nursing facility. So in addition to their traditional classes, these students have special relationships with people who depend

upon them for daily interaction. They work with the seniors and they also shadow many of the jobs at the nursing home from maintenance to office work to OT/PT. When the alarm clock goes off in the morning, these kids know exactly where they *want* to be.

Across the globe as I travel to bring workshops or keynotes or programs, I see a huge difference when young people and their teachers integrate a well-developed service-learning approach. Today, every young person may be at risk of leaving school and even at risk of staying in school with a shallow and meaningless experience. OR! We can enliven our schools with the purpose, promise, and practice of service-learning.

—Cathryn Berger Kaye, MA
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